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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 487  
By Givens

A RESOLUTION to provide for the erection of historical markers  
at the site of the former Price Public Elementary  
School building in Rogersville, Hawkins County.

WHEREAS, it is the policy of this General Assembly to provide for the erection of  
appropriate markers to commemorate significant eras and events in this state's panoramic  
history; and

WHEREAS, the Price Public School building, the site of the first elementary school for  
African American children in Rogersville, Hawkins County, is most assuredly a historically  
significant building that should be preserved for the edification and appreciation of present and  
future generations; and

WHEREAS, education of African American children became a matter of concern for both  
the black and the white members of the Hawkins County populace as early as 1868; and

WHEREAS, it was on the 17th of March, 1868 that African American citizens Alexander  
Fain, Jordan Netherland, Albert Jones and Nathaniel Mitchell purchased the plot of land where  
the present Price School building is situated, from A.P. Caldwell, and William C. Kyle, both of

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Hawkins County, for the purpose of building a schoolhouse for the education of African American children; and

WHEREAS, less than two years later, a rough frame and log building consisting of two classrooms and a storage space was constructed on the site and used as a schoolhouse until the early 1900s; and

WHEREAS, as the number of African American children to be educated increased and the old building gave in to the usual wear and tear and deterioration, it became apparent to African American citizens and to the city of Rogersville officials that the present building had served its utility and was ripe for demolition and replacement; and

WHEREAS, in early 1922, the old building was razed and construction of an adequate, modern facility was begun. Beginning in the fall of 1923, the African American children of Rogersville were accommodated in the currently existing building which had two large classrooms, a chapel and assembly room, two indoor toilet rooms, a large unfinished upstairs room and a central hot-air furnace in the basement. The building is of hand-fired brick construction with twelve-inch walls, which has enabled it to be classified as structurally sound even as of this late date; and

WHEREAS, the building was used as a high school for a short period and was considered to be a feeder school for the church-operated Swift Memorial College. The building ceased being used as a schoolhouse in 1958. Since then, it has served as a community center, cannery and storage building; and

WHEREAS, as the only known extant African American school building in Rogersville, the Price Public School building is a tangible example of the county's effort to provide education to African American children during an era when school consolidation and standardization was occurring in the early part of the century in Hawkins County; and

WHEREAS, during this era, churches would often serve as both schoolhouses and churches. The construction of this substantial three-room brick building is an indication that Hawkins County intended this project to be a permanent effort; and

WHEREAS, the Price Public School is listed as an "Historical Site" and is located in the Rogersville Historical District; and

WHEREAS, there are community efforts underway to restore the Price Public School Building to its original state so that it may once again serve as a community center for all Rogersville citizens, regardless of race, creed or national origin; and

WHEREAS, the saga of the Price Public School building vividly illuminates the history of African American citizens' early efforts to provide quality education for their children; this important era in American history should be carefully preserved lest we forget its importance in bringing about the end of segregation and the dawn of equal educational opportunity for all citizens; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That the Tennessee Historical Commission is hereby directed to erect appropriate historical markers at the site of the former Price Public School building in Rogersville, Hawkins County. Such signs shall delineate the distinguished history of the building and indicate that it housed the first school dedicated to the education of African American children in Hawkins County.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Tennessee Historical Commission.